



**you are bug
bites on
vacation**

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you are bug bites on vacation by pinkhearteyes

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Summary:

It's the middle of August, when Richie realises he needs to get away.

He doesn't really know what makes him so sure of this realisation. One thing that should be taken into consideration, is the fact that he's just been dumped by a long-term girlfriend. If you can call seven months long-term. Richie does, but maybe only to get pity points.

(Or - Richie is a lonesome writer, and recently single. Eddie is a travel agent with the prettiest eyes he's ever seen. Richie travels to Crete for inspiration, but finds much more.)

you are bug bites on vacation

It's the middle of August, when Richie realises he needs to get away.

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He spends the month after the breakup moping around his apartment, going outside only when he has to, and ordering food more often than cooking it himself. Stan comes by, to shake his head, and sigh in the fatherly way of his, that Richie knows so well.

"You can't keep going like this" Stan states, one day. Richie is laying on the couch, his head buried in the ugly, sand-coloured pillow. His groan is muffled by the fabric.

"This is good!" He suddenly hears Stan exclaim. He's standing at the dining table, a crumpled-up, coffee-stained paper in his hand, that Richie recognises from earlier that morning. He contemplates ripping it out of Stan's hands. It's his writing after all, and Richie's always been kind of selective with what he chooses to show his friends. He sighs. He's fighting a battle he can't win. Stan is looking at him with an excited spark in his eyes.

"You sound surprised? Should I be offended?"

"No, Rich, this is really good."

Richie flops over on his back, staring up at the ceiling. There's a piece of paper stuck there. Richie doesn't have to stand up on the couch, and look, to know that it's a poem. He had written it one night, three distant months ago, his mind fuzzy and unclear with love. It's ridiculous, now, and he wants to laugh at himself.

Instead, it hits him. How he's running around in the same circles he was three, even seven months ago. Studying never appealed to him much, not after high school. He attended writing classes though, and wrote with a feverish passion. He made his teacher, and four students

cry, once, reading a story about a girl whose boyfriend dies, tragically. It was all made up, of course, and not even that good in his opinion. He still remembers the teacher's tear stained face, and the hug he gave Richie afterwards. The pat on the back. The: "You're going to get far, kid".

He doesn't feel like he's gotten that far. He's just turned twenty-three, and feels more hopeless than ever.

He still attends the writing classes, sometimes. Not as often as he used to. They remind him of her. He had met Emily near Christmas. He instantly loved the way her hair fell when she sat, bent over the desk, writing. She loved him, even when he was annoying, and angry, and when he took jokes too far. She loved him, until she didn't, and left.

He stares at the peeling piece of paper stuck to the ceiling. He needs to get out of this apartment. He's suddenly aware of Stan's voice, that he's been successfully tuning out for a few minutes. Richie interrupts him. It's a bad habit of his, but there's always time for him to better himself.

"Do you think I should go on vacation?"

Stan shrugs, doesn't really seem to understand what he's asking.

He sorts the papers on the dining table into a neat stack.

"That's up to you".

Maybe he does understand, after all. Richie isn't even sure if he does, himself.

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Richie works at the local bookstore. On most days, at least. Stan had gotten him the job, through a close friend.

"Bill is great!" Stan had assured him many times.

"That sounds a bit gay, Stanley" was Richie's usual answer.

So, the day after Richie's big realisation, he's back in the bookstore, unpacking a new order of books. There's a grumpy, rebellious teenager doing work experience there, that Richie's caught angrily staring at him fifteen times already, in the first half hour of work. She snaps her gum loudly, and raises her eyebrows at him. Richie is more than a little relieved when Bill walks into the stockroom for the first time that day.

"Billy! Hey!" Bill turns around, looking like whatever Richie will say is going to end up stupid.

"Yes, Richie?"

They're the same age, but sometimes it feels like Bill is many years older.

"Stan told me you might know some guys who work at the travel agency?"

Bill looks lost in thought, for a few seconds. Richie doubts he has so many friends he has to think long and hard about which of them work where.

"...Yes, I know a guy."

"Great! Can I have his phone number?"

Bill sighs, but Richie's gotten to know him well enough over the past months to know it's nothing to take personally. Bill plucks a sharpie from behind his ear, and pens the number down, seemingly from memory alone.

"You know all your friend's numbers by heart?" Richie asks Bill's neck, that's disappearing into his office.

"You'd be surprised!" Bill shouts, and shuts the door.

Richie giggles a little to himself, before noticing the teenager staring again. She rolls her eyes, angrily, and ducks behind some book about communism Richie supposes he should be intrigued by.

The day after, he calls the number. They tell him to stop by at two o'clock, and he shamelessly uses it as an excuse to get out of work earlier. At the travel agency, he sits on an orange plastic chair, and inspects his surroundings. The receptionist looks tired behind her cat eye glasses. There's an old man sleeping a few chairs to Richie's left, and a big plant tucked into a corner of the room. A wind chime by the door tinkles happily whenever someone enters. Most importantly, there's travel posters all over the walls.

Richie hasn't decided where he wants to go yet. He looks at colourful posters for Spain, Italy, and The Bahamas, and his mind runs in circles. Then, someone calls his name, and he's invited in.

The walls inside the actual office are, if possible, more covered in travel posters. It's almost like wallpaper. The guy Stan knew, turns out to be a round-faced, friendly guy named Ben.

"So, Mr. Tozier, where are you planning on travelling?"

It's a bit weird. Ben looks about his age.

"You can call me Richie" Richie adjusts his glasses on his face. A nervous habit he had picked up in his very early teen years, and had never really let go.

"Richie, where are you planning on travelling?" Ben's hands are clasped in front of him on the table, and everything about him is very business-like, and professional, from his neatly combed hair, to the name plaque that reads: B. Hanscom. Still, he had introduced himself as Ben. Perhaps they aren't so different, Ben and him.

Ben radiates a friendly warmth, that makes Richie relax in his chair a little.

"To be honest with you, I have no idea. Obviously I'm a broke student-" Richie gestures to his clothes, a worn, well-loved jean jacket, and striped t-shirt. "Barely that. I work at the bookstore in town, but I'm telling you, it doesn't pay that well".

He utters the last sentence in a theatrical whisper, like him and Ben are characters in a sitcom sharing secrets.

“Is that so?” Ben looks amused, and poses it like a question. Richie supposes he should be flattered after all, if Ben couldn’t instantly tell he is a broke, almost-student.

“So you’re saying it has to fit your budget”. Ben states, taking notes on a yellow notepad in front of him.

“My very tight budget” Richie adds, craning his neck to get a better look at what Ben is writing.

“Anything else? Is it a just-for-fun-trip?”

Just-for-fun-trip doesn’t sound very professional, and Richie has to hold back a little snorting laugh.

“Actually, I’m a writer, so... I think pretty landscapes and good experiences would be good inspiration I guess”

“Oh” Ben looks pleasantly surprised, smiles, and jots something down.

“I wouldn’t have taken you for a writer”

“It’s hard to believe, I know”

A while later, Ben shakes his hand goodbye, and hands him a few pamphlets on Mediterranean travel. Ben speaks fondly of Italy, Turkey, and Greece, and Richie is interested. He’s seriously considering Italy, or Spain. But he has time to think. A few days at least.

“Oh, and one thing. I’d like to leave as soon as possible!” Richie says, from the door, and Ben nods at him, smiles.

“I’ll contact you” He promises, and returns to his notes.

Richie is smiling, his heart feeling sort of light for the first time in a while. However, when he turns in the direction of the exit, he bumps into someone, quite hard. His pamphlets fly from his hand, and scatter across the floor.

He hears a hissed: “Fuck!” and has time to register coffee spilling on

him. It isn't painfully hot, but still, burns a little.

"Oh fuck, I'm so sorry!"

There's a curly-haired, smartly-dressed guy bending down to pick the pamphlets up.

"It's okay, I-"

Richie feels as if the breath has been punched out of his lungs, when the guy looks up. He's utterly gorgeous. His eyes are wide and dark, and framed by prettily curling eyelashes. His hair is only a bit lighter than Richie's, and even if it's curly, it's neat swirls, nothing like Richie's bird's nest of hair. His skin is a warm golden, and Richie wonders if it's one of the perks of travelling a lot. Richie feels stupid for stopping mid-sentence. Then, the guy is touching his leg, and Richie's face burns hot in an instant.

"I spilt coffee on you!"

"It's fine, I promise-"

"Come with me" he says, and turns on his heel, returning in the direction he apparently came from. Richie isn't usually like this, stumbling over words and failing to speak. He feels so completely out of the situation, he would prefer to leave, sneak out through the door. Or maybe hide behind the plant in the corner. He probably would, if it weren't for the fact that the guy still has his pamphlets. And also happens to be the cutest person Richie's laid his eyes on in his entire life.

So, Richie follows him, his heart beating embarrassingly in his chest.

He's standing in a little staff kitchen, that Richie enters, tugging paper towels from the dispenser above the sink.

"I'm really sorry. I've been so out of it all day, with bookings and stuff"

"I get that"

The guy smiles like he doesn't really believe him. He starts gently

dabbing Richie's leg with paper towels. Richie's heart is still beating rapidly.

"I'm Eddie by the way."

"Richie"

Eddie inspects Richie's jeans, and Richie's mouth feels dry. He tells himself to fucking calm it, Eddie's only checking for coffee stainage.

"It looks okay. I'm sure it'll go away in the wash."

Richie nods, tucking his hands back into his pockets. He watches the perfect swirls of Eddie's hair as he tosses the paper towels in the trash. The kitchen is small and cozy. Someone at the workplace seems to be quite the artist. There's caricature drawings of both Ben, and Eddie on the fridge. Richie naturally doesn't recognise the other workers, but there's more drawings taped to the kitchen cabinets. There's more plants in here, crowding on the tiny windowsill, pushed in next to the toaster.

Eddie's apparently making himself a new coffee.

"Do you want one?"

"No thank you" Richie's almost in a rush to get the words out, is scared to get stuck in a technically perfect situation with Eddie, today, when he feels far from the top of his game. Eddie doesn't seem to think much of the way Richie's obviously tense.

"So where are you travelling?" He's gotten the question twice today already, and still isn't sure of the answer.

Eddie hands him back the pamphlets, then. The Italy one is smudged with coffee stains. Perhaps a sign from the universe itself. So, Richie crosses Italy off his mental checklist.

"Thinking about the Mediterranean? I take care of Crete travel groups" Eddie says, pushing the kitchen door open. He mentions it casually, like it really doesn't matter that much to him. Richie begins following him to the door.

"Oh, that's where I'm going actually" Richie feels the words leave

him before he can overthink them twice, three times. He sort of meant it as a joke. You can't go wrong with a classic coincidence-joke, in his opinion. They're already by the front door, and Eddie lets out a surprised hum. It's a pleasant sound.

Richie lingers just outside the door for a bit longer than what feels necessary. Eddie quickly tapes a new poster to the front door, before opening it again.

"Well, I look forward to seeing you, Richie" The smile he offers is warm like his eyes, and Richie's stomach gives a little tug.

"You too!" He says cheerfully, and means it.

Richie skips happily to Stan's work.

Stan is, of course, pissed at him for deciding on a travel location that isn't "Close, Richie, you're broke, remember?"

Richie weakly defends himself by saying "He had the prettiest eyes I've ever seen, Stanley" and "I'll take a loan". It's not like Stan is his dad, or brother even. Still, he wants the best for Richie. He ends up admitting that it's a bit of a stupid decision, but tells both himself and Stan that it'll be worth it.

Stan rolls his eyes over the greasy fries they're sharing.

"You're such a guy, thinking with your dick before your actual brain". He's smiling though, and Richie knows not to take him too seriously.

"I'm offended you would even say that, Stan. This guy-" he points at himself "- was thinking with his heart".

"Yeah, whatever" Stan grins, and tosses a French fry at his head.

Richie tears a piece of lettuce from his burger into little shreds, and looks over the busy street, through the window. He wonders what sort of restaurants there are in Crete.

"I'm glad you're not thinking about her as much, though"

Richie is too. He's thinking of suntan lotion and Greek beaches, and warm brown eyes now, instead.

"Yeah. Me too".

Author's Note:

i've been wanting to write this for a while, and i'm really excited to keep adding chapters!!

disclaimer: i'm scandinavian and i don't really have much of an idea of how the american school system works (with the whole richie taking writing classes thing) soo take my writing with a pinch of salt i guess!

thank you so much for reading!! i appreciate&love u all for ur comments on my last fic, thank you soo much <33

title is from 'outside with the cuties' by frankie cosmos!